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ABSTRACT

A guide intended to be used by boards of education and administrators lists economical and socially useful ways to put unwanted schools back to work. Items include minimizing community opposition, help that can be obtained from consultants, zoning questions, and some alternative building uses that may be considered. (Author/MLF)

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SCHOOL DISPOSAL GUIDE

This leaflet outlines our approach to the RE-USE of excess schools. It is intended as a guide to be used by School Board Staff and Committees or Task Forces seeking economical and socially useful ways to put unwanted schools back to work. Please call us if further guidance is needed.

FILL OUT FOR EACH SCHOOL TO BE CONSIDERED

A. PHYSICAL DATA

1. Name of school.
2. Address.
3. Year built.
4. Size.
   a. Dimensions of typical floor.
   b. Number of floors, excluding basement and attic.
   c. Is there a full basement?
   d. Is there a full attic?
   e. Dimensions of grounds.
   f. How many steps from street or main floor up or down?

B. ZONING

1. Is this school in an incorporated village or city?
2. If so, what village or city?
3. If not, what township?
4. What is the present zoning of the school?
5. What kinds of areas are next to the school?
6. Behind it?
7. Across the street?
8. What other uses could reasonably be expected under the present zoning?
9. What other uses could reasonably be expected under some other zoning?

C. SOME USES THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED

1. Private or community nursery school.
2. Senior citizens' housing.
3. Community center.
4. Public library.
5. BOCES school.
6. Medical center or professional office building.
7. Office building: single tenant or multiple tenant.
8. Light industry.
9. Telephone exchange.
10. Bank.

D. SOME SELL OR RENT OPTIONS

1. Sell to highest bidder.
   Note: Before you decide to sell, answer this question: Are we sure that 20 years from now the population trend will not be reversed?
2. Rent, up to 5 years permitted by State law, with renewal options.

3. Alter and sell, or alter and rent. Since school districts borrow at lower rates than commercial borrowers, this may be profitable to both parties.
4. Go for legislation to permit long-term rental (say 20 years).
5. Ask Village and Town authorities if they want to use the building.

E. WHAT HELP IS NEEDED FROM CONSULTANTS?

1. Marketing study to determine community needs and best use.
2. Zoning study.
3. Appraisal to determine probable sale price or rental charges.
4. Feasibility and cost study.
5. Financing study.
6. Architect/engineer services.
7. Construction management.
8. Building rental and management.

F. HOW TO MINIMIZE COMMUNITY OPPOSITION

1. Plan way ahead so that most of the teachers, custodians, kitchen help and other staff can be absorbed in the system, to replace retiring people and so on. Get as much staff support as possible.
2. Have the Board President or other top school person talk privately to community leaders, especially in the neighborhood of the school to be disposed of.
3. If the school closing affects one social or ethnic group more than others, approach the leaders of that group privately, well in advance.
4. Talk to the leaders of taxpayer groups to assure solid support.

5. Don't talk to anyone until you have solid figures on the cost to keep the school open, including staff, utilities, maintenance, loss of rental or sale income and the like. Don't forget the cost of upgrading an old building to conform to current State standards.
6. Try to select a new use for the property that fills a neighborhood need; for example, offices and light industry provide jobs for both men and women. If unemployment is high, this may be attractive.
7. Talk privately to the Zoning Board Chairman. Make sure he will go along with your plans before you announce them.
8. When everyone else has been lined up, as far as is possible, have a talk with the local newspaper editor, and try to get a commitment for editorial support.
9. All these steps must be taken between one School Board election and the next. Don't straddle an election period: try to keep school closing from becoming an election issue.

If help is needed, call us. We have been dealing with school buildings and school boards (as Trustee and as consultants) since 1947. Our expertise is at your service.

BOGEN JENAL ENGINEERS
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
983 WILLIS AVENUE, ALBERTSON, N.Y. 11507
(212) 895-3388 (516) 747-4288